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VOID RIVALS
image
#13

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YOU HAVE FAILED ME!
YOU HAVE FAILED COBRA-LA!

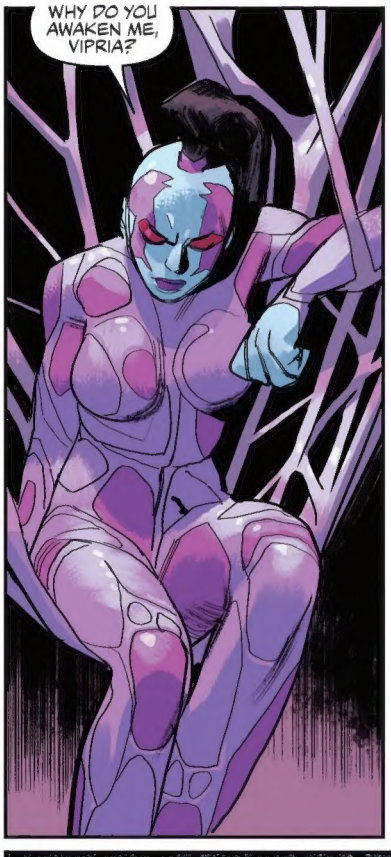
CYBERTRONIANS! THESE METAL MONSTROSITIES ARE AN AFFRONT TO ALL WE HOLD DEAR!

YOU WERE SENT TO FIND THEIR HOMEWORLD--LEARN THEIR WEAKNESSES! BEND THEIR ABHORRENT ARTIFICIAL BODIES UNTIL THEY BREAK!

INSTEAD-- YOU HAVE DONE NOTHING!

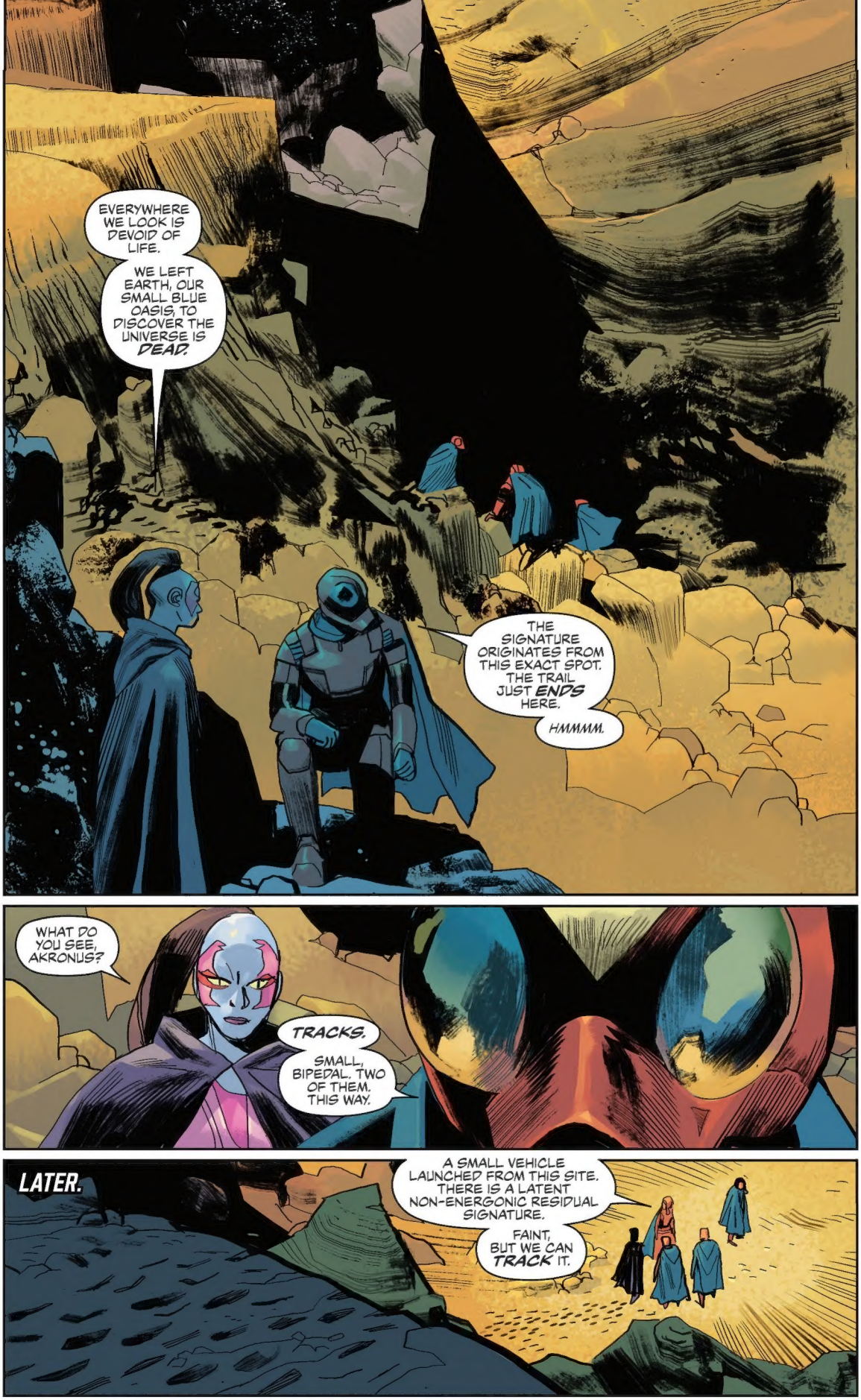
YOU ARE A WEAK, PATHETIC CHILD! UNWORTHY OF THE NAME--

--PYTHONA?
:GASP!:


WHY DO YOU AWAKEN ME, VIPRIA?

I AM SORRY, MY LIEGE.
THE ENERGONIC SIGNATURE WE WERE TRACKING FROM EARTH... IT'S LED US TO A PLANETOID.

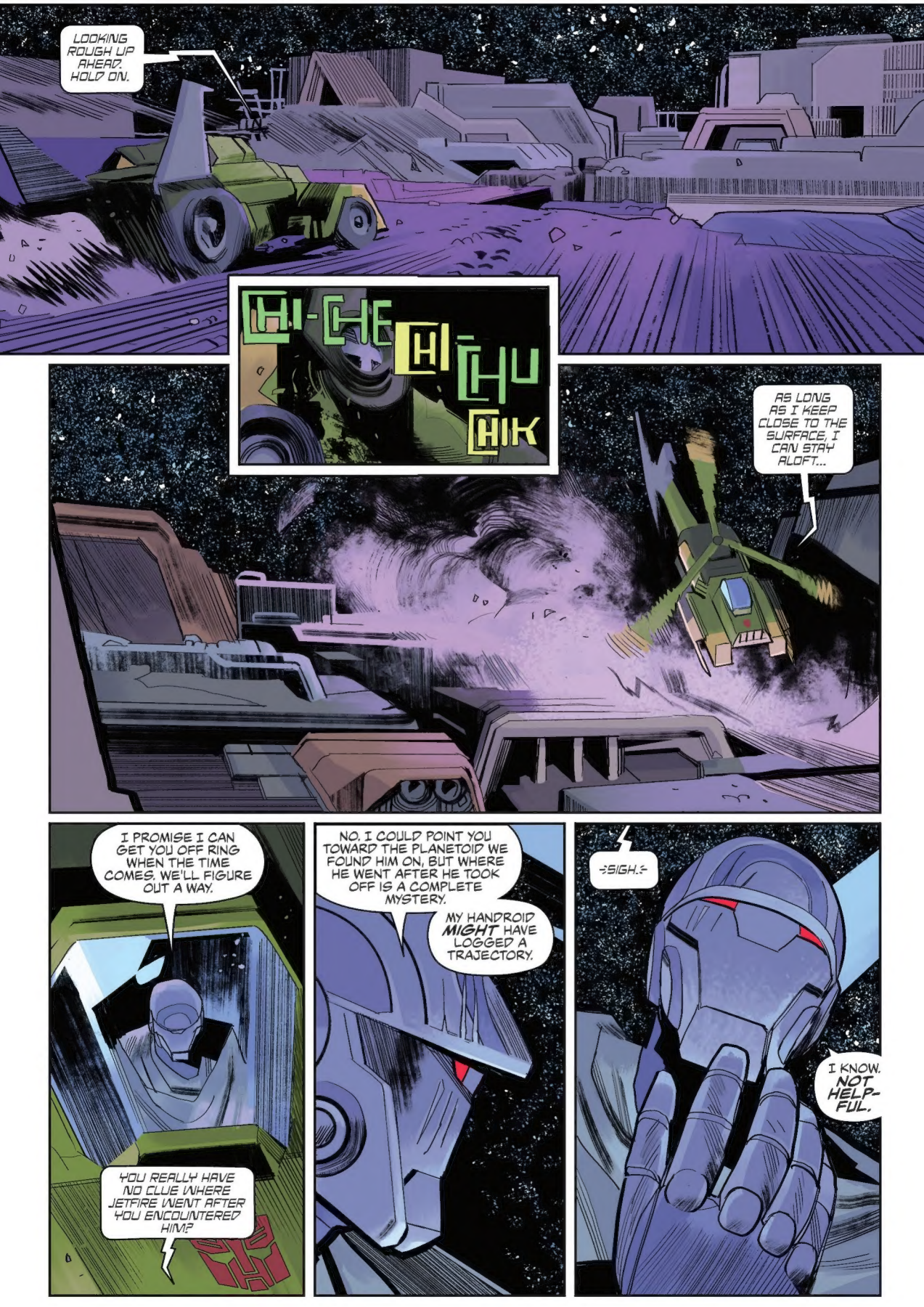
TELL YOUR SQUADRON TO PREPARE FOR LANDING.
PERHAPS THIS MISSION HOLDS PROMISE YET.


EVERYWHERE WE LOOK IS DEVOID OF LIFE.
WE LEFT EARTH, OUR SMALL BLUE OASIS, TO DISCOVER THE UNIVERSE IS DEAD.
THE SIGNATURE ORIGINATES FROM THIS EXACT SPOT. THE TRAIL JUST ENDS HERE.
HMMMM.
WHAT DO YOU SEE, AKRONUS?
TRACKS.
SMALL, BIPEDAL. TWO OF THEM. THIS WAY.
LATER.
A SMALL VEHICLE LAUNCHED FROM THIS SITE. THERE IS A LATENT NON-ENERGONIC RESIDUAL SIGNATURE.
FAINT, BUT WE CAN TRACK IT.

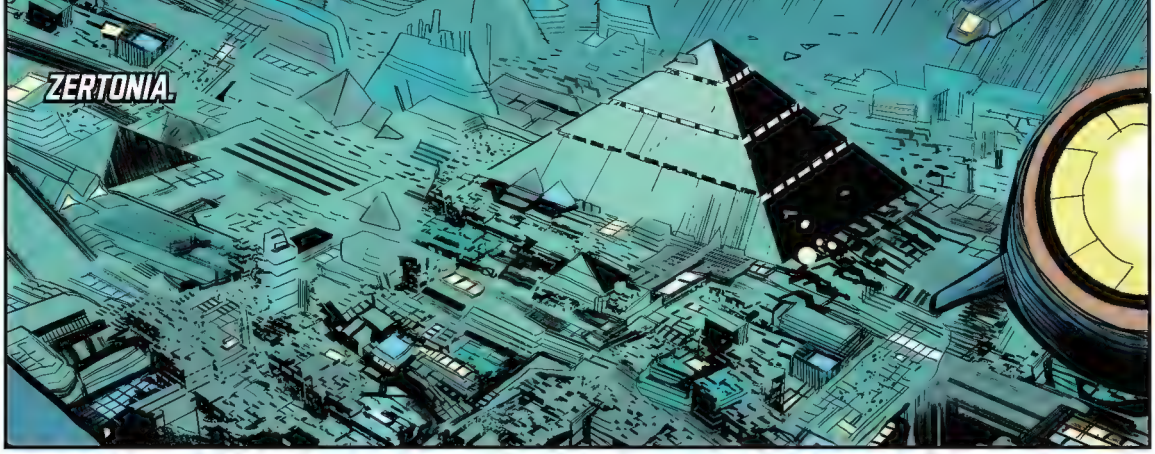
WASTE LAND.
=UNGH.=
I'M SORRY. MY SCANS SHOWED THIS TO BE THE MOST PASSABLE ROUTE BELOW.
THE INNER WORKINGS OF THE SACRED RING APPEAR NOT TO BE DESIGNED FOR TRAVERSAL.
IT'S OKAY.
=UMPH!=
I'M MANAGING.

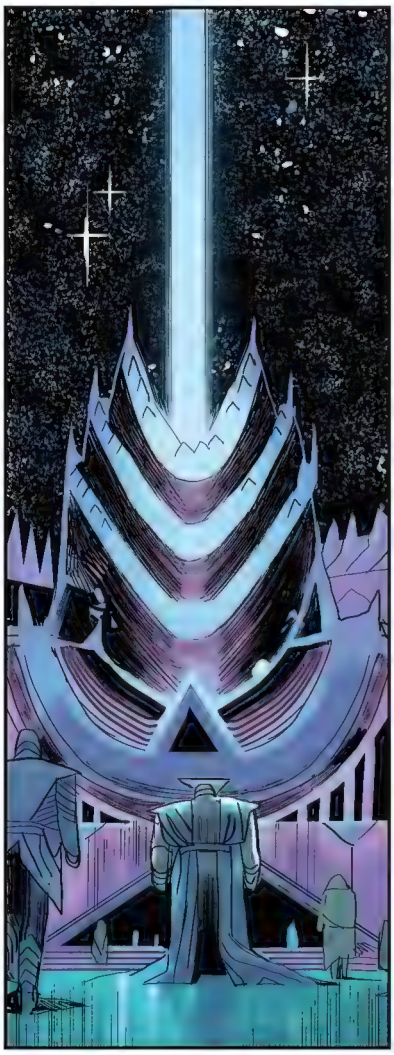
YOUR STRUGGLE LEADS ME TO A QUERY.
OH?
SPRINGER ABANDONED HIS EXCAVATION OF THE SACRED RING BECAUSE IT WAS TOO DENSE AND HE KNEW A BEING OF HIS SIZE WOULD HAVE DIFFICULTY GETTING MUCH LOWER.
BEING FROM THE SAME PLANET, WOULDN'T ZERTA TRION--
ZERTA.
--ZERTA ALSO BE A SIMILAR SIZE? THEREFORE, IF WE'RE TRYING TO FIND HER, HOW COULD SHE POSSIBLY BE DOWN HERE?
OH, HANDROID.
YOU JUST NEED TO HAVE FAITH.
THAT IS NOT IN MY PROGRAMMING.
SORRY.

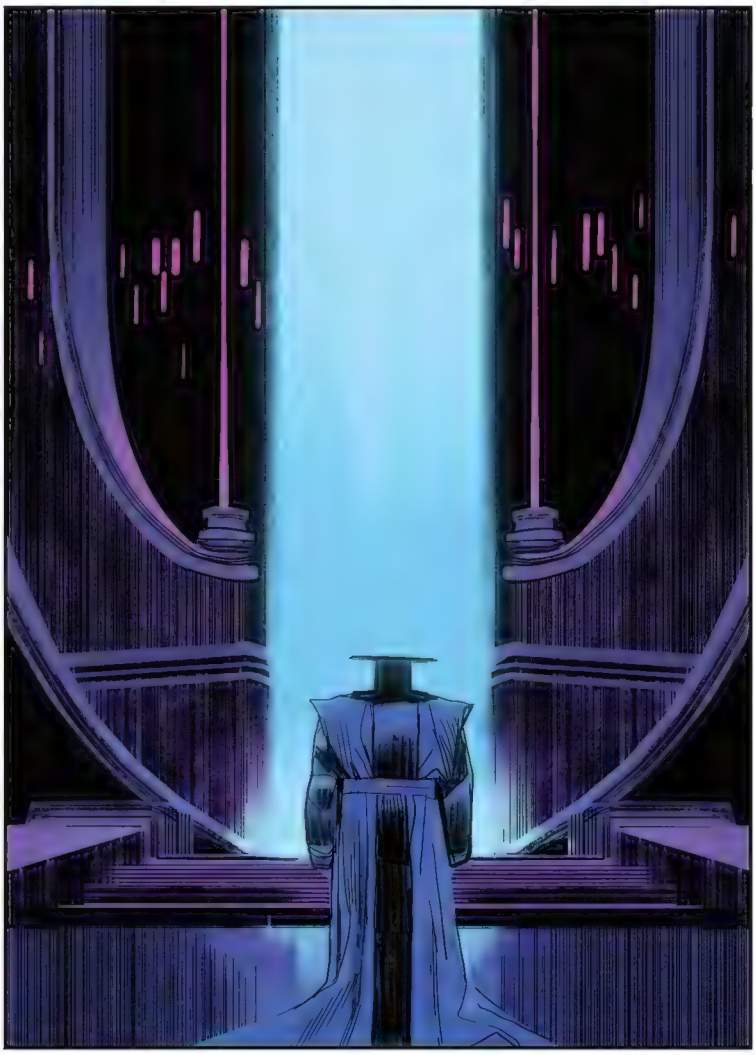
DEEP SPACE.
"TELL ME, SKUXXOID. DON'T YOU FEEL... EXPOSED ALL THE WAY OUT HERE?"
HUH? NO. I USUALLY DRIFT IN THIS AREA FOR WEEKS ON END. IT'S A NEXUS OF MANY TRANSPORT LANES. THE MOST CURIOUS ODDITIES HAVE FALLEN IN MY LAP IN THIS VERY SPOT.
MOST SHIPS MISTAKE MY ROCKEROID FOR A MERE ASTEROID. AND THE EMPTINESS... BRINGS ME A SENSE OF... PEACE.
OKAY THEN. YOU'VE MORE THAN HELD UP YOUR END OF THE BARGAIN. NOW ABOUT YOUR FEE...
PAY ME.
DON'T PAY ME.
HONESTLY, BOSCH, I DON'T EVEN CARE ANYMORE.
...


LOOKING ROUGH UP AHEAD. HOLD ON.
CHI-CHE CHI-CHU CHIK
AS LONG AS I KEEP CLOSE TO THE SURFACE, I CAN STAY ALOFT...
I PROMISE I CAN GET YOU OFF RING WHEN THE TIME COMES. WE'LL FIGURE OUT A WAY.
YOU REALLY HAVE NO CLUE WHERE JETFIRE WENT AFTER YOU ENCOUNTERED HIM?
NO. I COULD POINT YOU TOWARD THE PLANETOID WE FOUND HIM ON, BUT WHERE HE WENT AFTER HE TOOK OFF IS A COMPLETE MYSTERY.
MY HANDROID MIGHT HAVE LOGGED A TRAJECTORY.
-SIGH.-
I KNOW. NOT HELP-FUL.

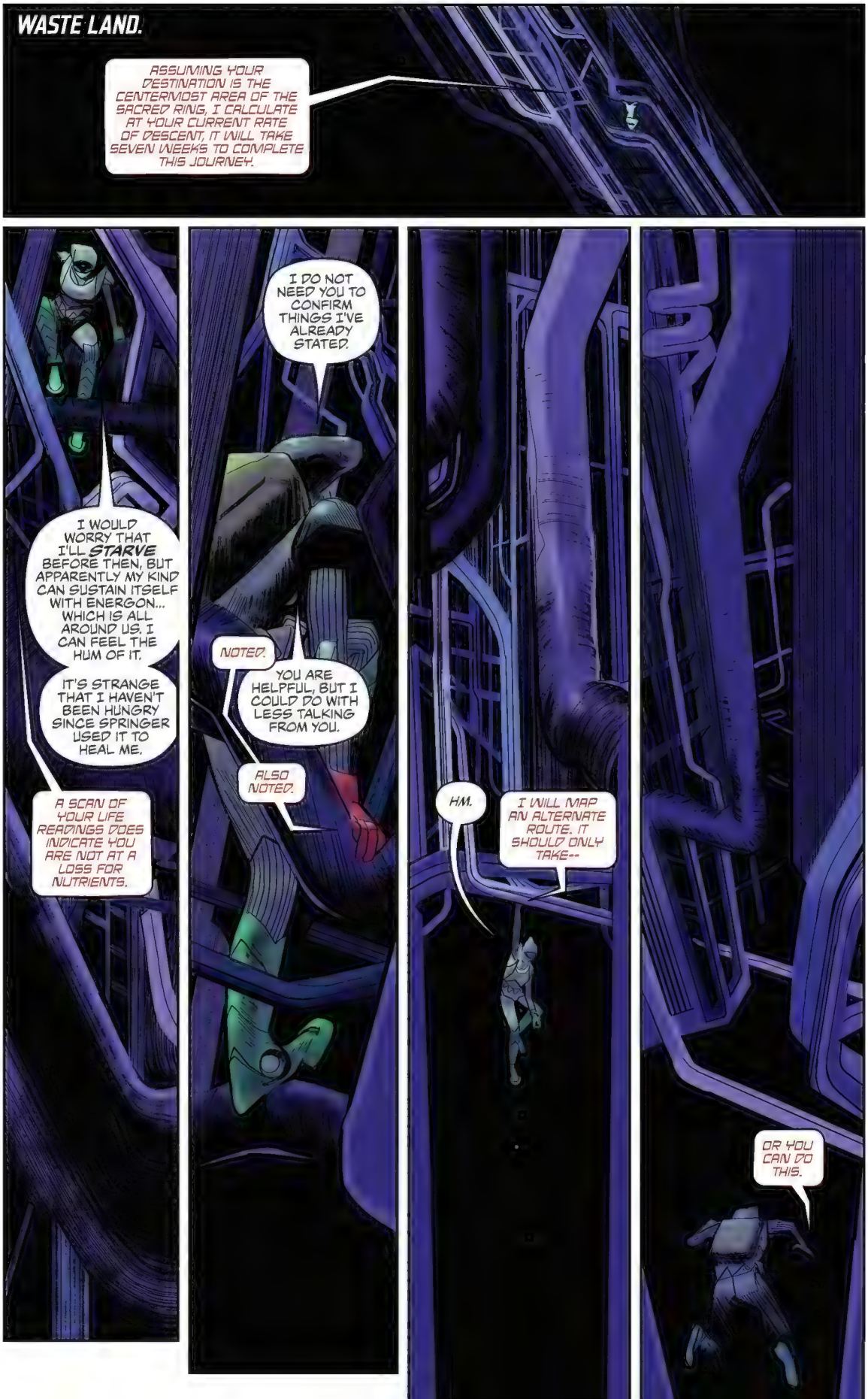
CAN'T GO MUCH FARTHER WITHOUT BEING DETECTED.
LANDING.
WAIT HERE. I'LL SIGNAL YOU WHEN I'M READY.
STANDING BY.
GOOD LUCK.


ZERTONIA.





PREMIERE ZALILAK...
I MUST ADMIT I AM SURPRISED TO SEE YOU GRACE OUR SACRED HALL WITH YOUR PRESENCE. A RARE OCCURRENCE, TO BE SURE.
PLEASE, MISTRESS VILL...
YOU MUST BE DESPERATE IF YOU'RE TURNING TO ME.


WASTE LAND.
ASSUMING YOUR DESTINATION IS THE CENTERMOST AREA OF THE SACRED RING, I CALCULATE AT YOUR CURRENT RATE OF DESCENT, IT WILL TAKE SEVEN WEEKS TO COMPLETE THIS JOURNEY.
I WOULD WORRY THAT I'LL STARVE BEFORE THEN, BUT APPARENTLY MY KIND CAN SUSTAIN ITSELF WITH ENERGON... WHICH IS ALL AROUND US. I CAN FEEL THE HUM OF IT.
IT'S STRANGE THAT I HAVEN'T BEEN HUNGRY SINCE SPRINGER USED IT TO HEAL ME.
A SCAN OF YOUR LIFE READINGS DOES INDICATE YOU ARE NOT AT A LOSS FOR NUTRIENTS.
I DO NOT NEED YOU TO CONFIRM THINGS I'VE ALREADY STATED.
NOTED.
YOU ARE HELPFUL, BUT I COULD DO WITH LESS TALKING FROM YOU.
ALSO NOTED.
HM.
I WILL MAP AN ALTERNATE ROUTE. IT SHOULD ONLY TAKE--
OR YOU CAN DO THIS.

THUNK
TEK
...
THAP

AGORRIA.
DARAK?!
WHEN THEY REPORTED YOU WERE SIGHTED--I COULDN'T BELIEVE IT! I HAD TO BE THE ONE TO BRING YOU IN. YOU'RE ACTUALLY ALIVE!
I AM.
I... I'M SORRY, DIRECTOR ELANDER... I JUST...
I NEVER THOUGHT I'D SEE THIS PLACE AGAIN.
THIS WAY. LET'S GET YOU SOMEWHERE YOU CAN REST.
THE CAPITAL? YOU'RE TAKING ME TO THE CAPITAL?
YES.
MINISTER DULIN WOULD LIKE TO SEE YOU AT ONCE.

FATHER.
SON.
ENOUGH OF THIS.
WHERE ARE YOU HIDING YOUR ZERTONIAN ALLY?
YOU KNOW?

OF COURSE I KNOW!
DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEA THE FORCES IN WHICH YOU MEDDLE? NO. OF COURSE YOU DON'T... OR YOU WOULDN'T HAVE TRIED TO HIDE YOUR--
TREASONOUS BEHAVIOR!
SO YOU'RE GOING TO KILL ME?
--WHEN YOU'VE SO CLEARLY ALSO BEEN CONSPIRING WITH OUR SO-CALLED ENEMY!
YOU WILL SHOW ME THE RESPECT MY STATION COMMANDS!
OH, THIS AGAIN?! WE'RE BACK TO THIS?!
YOUR LOWLY PILOT SON--YOUR BIGGEST EMBARRASSMENT?!
I NEVER WANTED YOU TO BE A PILOT. I DETEST THE PATH YOU'VE CHOSEN FOR YOURSELF.
THIS IS TRUE.
I DON'T BELIEVE YOU HAVE AN INKLING AS TO WHY.
YOU ARE QUITE POSSIBLY THE BEST PILOT WE HAVE EVER HAD. BUT NO MATTER THE SKILL LEVEL, I DON'T NEED ANOTHER PILOT. I NEED A SUCCESSOR.
YOU TURNED YOUR BACK ON YOUR DESTINY. YOU CHOSE A... LESSER PATH.
I NEED SOMEONE TO HELP ME CARRY THIS BURDEN. WE MUST PREVENT UNITY AT ALL COSTS.

PREVENT IT? SO YOU THINK IF I WAS YOUR SUCCESSOR I'D WANT TO KEEP PRETENDING THE ZERTONIANS ARE MYSTERIOUS AND EVIL CREATURES HELL-BENT ON OUR DESTRUCTION?
THAT I WOULD SO DESIRE THE POWER OF LEADERSHIP I'D TURN MY BACK ON WHAT IS GOOD AND DECENT?!
THEY'RE JUST LIKE US! THEY HAVE THE SAME HOPES AND DREAMS AND STRUGGLES! WE SHOULD STOP ALL THIS INFIGHTING AND COME TOGETHER.
UNITY IS OUR FUTURE!
NO, SON. YOU HAVE BEEN MISLED.
UNITY IS THE PATH TO DESTRUCTION. IT WILL TEAR OUR CIVILIZATION ASUNDER AND SHATTER THE SACRED RING UNTIL... NOTHING REMAINS.
UNITY IS OUR VERY END.

ZERTONIA.
TEMPLE OF ZERTA'S LIGHT.
I HAVE FAILED..
AND NOW OUR WORLD IS ON THE BRINK OF RUIN.
YOU FEAR UNITY, PREMIERE ZALILAK, AS YOU WERE TAUGHT TO AFTER YOU WERE SHOWN THE SACRED TEXTS.
THOSE WORDS WERE WRITTEN WITH FEAR BY FLAWED MEN WHO DID NOT COMPREHEND THE FORCES AT WORK IN OUR WORLD.
FLAWED MEN WITH FLAWED IDEAS, PASSING FLAWED BELIEFS DOWN GENERATION AFTER GENERATION...
UNTIL YOU.
I KNEEL BEFORE YOU, SEEKING GUIDANCE, AND ALL YOU OFFER IS BLASPHEMY!

KR
AK
AND YOU WILL KNEEL AGAIN!
AND BE TAUGHT ANEW, SHOWN THE WAYS OF THE LIGHT OF ZERTA. YOU HAVE YOUR SACRED TEXTS, BUT WE ARE THE KEEPERS OF THE LIGHT, AND LIGHT CANNOT BE CORRUPTED.
YOU WILL LEARN OUR WAYS... AND LEARN THAT WHILE UNITY MAY VERY WELL BRING ABOUT AN END...
WHAT FOLLOWS THAT IS A NEW BEGINNING.

TALK TO THE HANDROID

SEND YOUR QUESTIONS TO VOIDRIVALS@SKYBOUND.COM

Greetings friends and readers, welcome back to Talk to the Handroid--did you miss us after our small break?! I can say that we sure missed you...my name is Ben Abernathy, your co-host, and joining me as always is acclaimed writer Robert Kirkman!

Man, I hate these breaks! We keep taking these breaks between arcs (granted, this one was far shorter than the first one) and it's causing us to slowly slip behind Transformers! Not good! We're the lead book of this line, dang it! What keeps happening...oh, it's me? It's my fault. Yeah, sorry about that.

Try as I might to get ahead on scripts something always just jumps in the way. Very sorry about that. Unrelated, if you haven't already, do please watch the Invincible show on Prime Video. I'd really appreciate it.

In return I'll do everything I can to stop gumming up the works with my slow scripts!

Let's answer some mail.

. . . . . .

Hey Robert,

Dropping in again to say I just finished #12 and cannot wait for Pythona to get into the mix, finally bringing all three titles together! This got me thinking…

Now, as the grand architect of the EU, I have no doubt your roadmap for this epic has many yet-to-be announced additions. I'd never want you to spoil anything so I'm instead going to speculate and/or daydream. The previous publisher of these IPs afforded a venue for short, one-off tales of the massive TF cast that "spotlighted" some additional backstory, written and drawn at times by new creative forces coming to join the party. On behalf of the Energon Universe University, we'd all love to see some one-shot EU vignettes! Thundercracker: Con Warrior. Mercer in "The Defector." Skuxxoid's Day Out! With so many rich characters to choose, the possibilities are endless! (I even have a story of survivor's guilt with a certain TF redeco that's been in my head canon for a while now.)

Vignettes or not, keep up the good work, sir! It's clear these characters are in good hands!

Mark J. Schultis

Dean of EUU - Energon Universe University

PS - Handroid is Cybertronian, isn't he? Possibly Perceptor's Spark locked in a glove? Come on, you can tell me!

No! Handroid is 100% Agorrian technology. I promise.

As for spotlight mini-series, what you're going to see from Skybound long term, is really just a completely different philosophy on how to sustain a line of comics. The goal here is to keep things as simple as possible. That means as few series as possible and consecutive numbering to keep things...simple. We did the series of minis leading to the launch of G.I. JOE (coming in NOVEMBER, get ready!) but that was a special case. Moving forward we will be trying to keep things lean and mean, for the foreseeable future at least, the Energon Universe will consist of three series, TRANSFORMERS, G.I. JOE and...what's that other one called? In the future? Who knows what exciting stuff we may already be planning!

. . . . . .

Dear Handroid of the Void,

As the chaotic person I am, starting from issue #5, I fell in love with this wonderful series, and worked my way backwards to read the amazingness! I work at Stairway to Heaven Comics, and I have been infecting everyone I can with love for Void Rivals. We are giddy as children when a new issue arrives, and I personally always read it before any other in my pile.

I am so excited to see what kind of relationship Solila and Darak will grow between them as they navigate all these challenges!

Now for my confession: I am not a Transformers fan. I picked this series up at random, and am loving all the strange things intertwined within. I even read DWJ's Transformers #1 and it was really good! For now, I am just sticking with Void Rivals and expect to be confused and delighted every time a crossover or reference happens. I have no idea who Skuxxoid is, but he's trying so dang hard!

As for issue #12, leaving off with a giant, ominous, glowing pair of eyes from within a literal void? Yes, please!

Ari S. of New Hampshire

Thank you for the letter, Ari (shout out to Stairway to Heaven Comics!). I would like to think the Energon Universe has something for all fans and while

TRANSFORMERS might not be your cup of tea, your continued enthusiasm and support for VOID RIVALS means everything.

I will echo Ben's sentiments and gratitude but I also have to say, I can't CONCEIVE of a person who is enjoying Void Rivals who wouldn't also enjoy TRANSFORMERS. You should really give that book another chance. As well as G.I. JOE, as you can see with this issue, there are fun entanglements coming from both of those corners of the universe in this very series.

TO BE CLEAR it is VERY important to us that each of these series can be enjoyed on their own. None of these other books are required reading...but...we gotta try, you know? The experience of reading them all is cool and will only get cooler as the series progress.

WHO TF WAS THAT, WAS IT UNICRON?!?! IS THERE A NEW PLANET TRANSFORMER?????? INSIDE THE RING??????? IS IT UNICRON?????????????????? It can't be Unicron, Unicron has bigger horns!!!! I can't do this anymore, I'm going into stasis. Wake me up when this series is over, I need to binge it all this second. Give me the rest of this series right now PRIMUS PLEASE.

Keep cooking this series is peak,

Dylan

If there's ONE thing I know...it's what Unicron looks like and let me tell you... that didn't LOOK like Unicron!

• • • • • • • • • • • • • •

Hey Void Rivals team,

I wanted to let you guys know just how much I've been enjoying the EU. I think each one of these comics have something to give to the greater TF and Joe universe. A standout to me is Void Rivals, though. Void Rivals being an original property, has had such a big impact on me personally, and it has shocked me how quickly I have grown to love these characters. I'm originally a Transformers fan, but I can confidently say that even if it wasn't connected to a franchise I hold so dearly, it would be such a good comic. I do have some questions though.

1). Zerta Trion shares the last name of Alpha Trion, are you intending them to be family or is it more like how the Prime name is passed on from bot to bot?

You'll just have to keep reading! Sorry! (it'll be worth it!)

2). Are we ever going to get any Void Rivals content that is completely disconnected from Transformers or G.I Joe?

I feel like there must have been at least one issue that was free of any preexisting elements but maybe not? I'm sure there will be eventually. If that's what you mean. As a part of the shared universe, there will always be connections so it'll never be more than an issue or two without some kind of element of the larger universe at play.

3). We got the G.I. Joe kickstarter for ARAH, can we expect anything like that for Transformers? I think it would be cool to get more collector focused compendiums of things like the original Marvel comics or IDW's run instead of just the paperback compendiums that we will be getting next year.

If you only knew the Herculean effort that the team at Skybound puts into these Kickstarters...lordy. It's MIND BOGGLING the amount of work that goes into pulling that together. I'll...leave my answer at that.

That's all the questions I had, I can't wait to see the end of the second arc, and with Hot Rod entering the story soon, my hopes have never been higher for an ongoing comic series. Thank you for taking the time to read this.

Cameron G, Pace FL

Thank you reading, Cameron, and taking the time to write us.

• • • • • • • • • • • • • •

Void Rivals Team,

I greatly enjoy how every issue of VR has its own color in the logo and Talk to the Handroid pages, but issue 11's use of thin, yellow text on a yellow background had all of the fan letters' text blend in with the background to the point that I couldn't read them. For future yellow issues, maybe you can change the text color a bit to stand out better from the background?

Andres Juarez and his crack team, Jillian, Richard and Ashby are always doing top notch work but their designs are sometimes too much for our printers to handle! We'll try to avoid overpowering our dutiful printers in the future.

Unrelated, I love that in issue 11, Hot Rod's training robot is just as fond of sucker punches as it was in the 1986 Movie! Is there any chance that Training Bot can be Hotrod's awful sidekick? Also, is it weird that a Transformer can just OWN a bipedal robot, or is Training Bot more comparable to a pet, like Soundwave's Cassetticons?

Heh, it's a little bit like the Pluto, Goofy situation, huh? Man...that might warrant some exploration...we'll just have to see.

Thank you for this amazing comic,

Sean Taylor, NJ

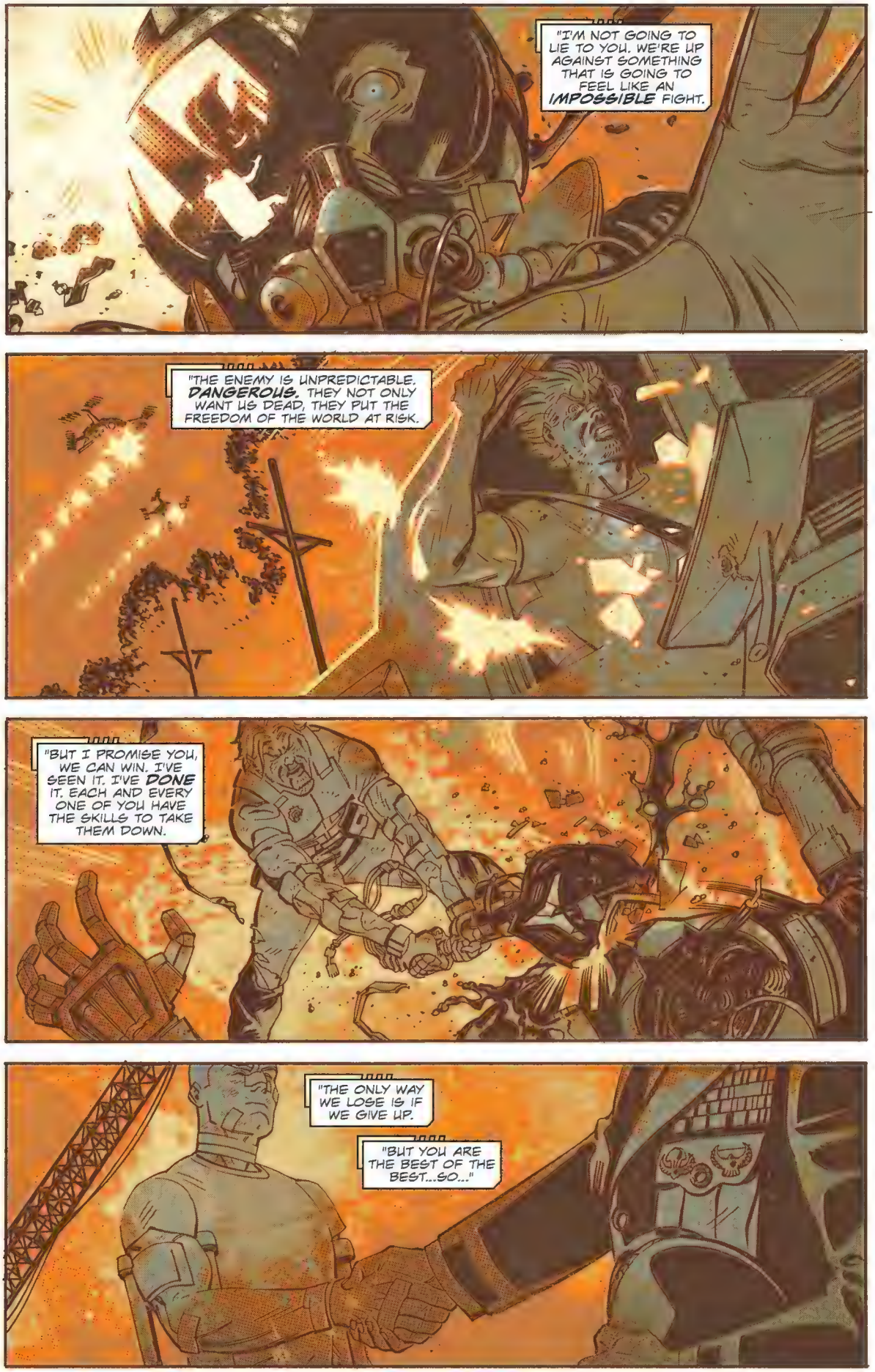
• • • • • • • • • • • • • •

Oh, man...issue 14 is next? Hoo boy! This arc is going to be sooooo fun!!!! BUCKLE UP, PEOPLE!!!

-Robert Kirkman

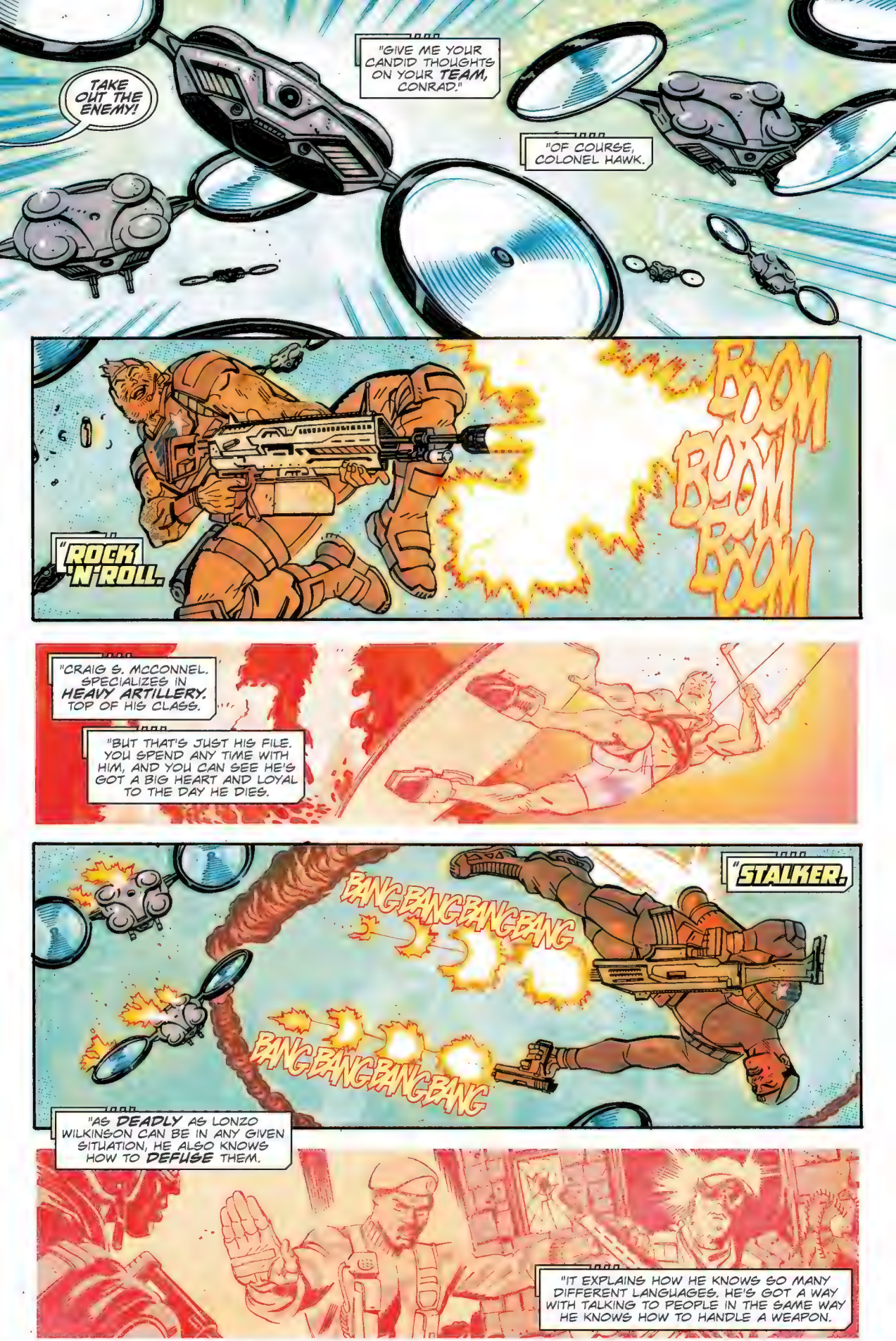
Keep the letters coming, folks! And as a special treat--enjoy the preview to our next epic Energon Universe monthly--G.I. JOE #1, on sale November 13th!

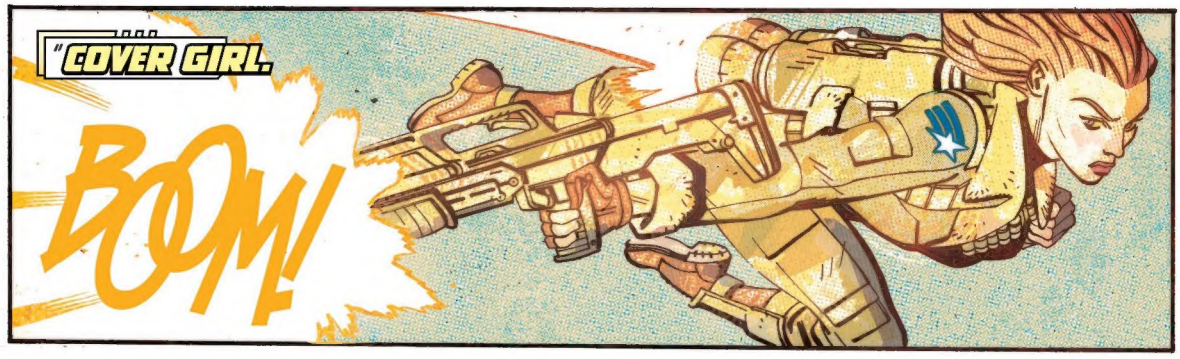
-Ben


"I'M NOT GOING TO LIE TO YOU. WE'RE UP AGAINST SOMETHING THAT IS GOING TO FEEL LIKE AN IMPOSSIBLE FIGHT.
"THE ENEMY IS UNPREDICTABLE. DANGEROUS. THEY NOT ONLY WANT US DEAD, THEY PUT THE FREEDOM OF THE WORLD AT RISK.
"BUT I PROMISE YOU, WE CAN WIN. I'VE SEEN IT. I'VE DONE IT. EACH AND EVERY ONE OF YOU HAVE THE SKILLS TO TAKE THEM DOWN.
"THE ONLY WAY WE LOSE IS IF WE GIVE UP.
"BUT YOU ARE THE BEST OF THE BEST...SO..."

LISTEN UP, SOLDIERS!

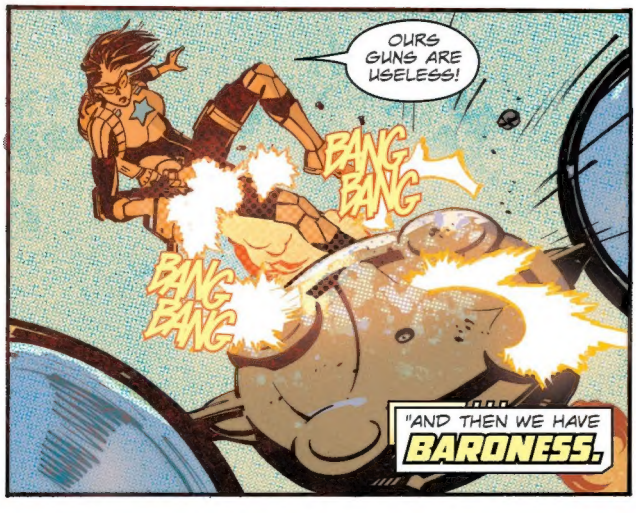
HERE IS YOUR OBJECTIVE...


TAKE OUT THE ENEMY!
"GIVE ME YOUR CANDID THOUGHTS ON YOUR TEAM, CONRAD."
"OF COURSE, COLONEL HAWK.
"ROCK 'N' ROLL.
BOOM BOOM BOOM BOOM
"CRAIG S. MCCONNEL. SPECIALIZES IN HEAVY ARTILLERY. TOP OF HIS CLASS.
"BUT THAT'S JUST HIS FILE. YOU SPEND ANY TIME WITH HIM, AND YOU CAN SEE HE'S GOT A BIG HEART AND LOYAL TO THE DAY HE DIES.
"STALKER.
BANG BANG BANG BANG
BANG BANG BANG BANG
"AS DEADLY AS LONZO WILKINSON CAN BE IN ANY GIVEN SITUATION, HE ALSO KNOWS HOW TO DEFUSE THEM.
"IT EXPLAINS HOW HE KNOWS SO MANY DIFFERENT LANGUAGES. HE'S GOT A WAY WITH TALKING TO PEOPLE IN THE SAME WAY HE KNOWS HOW TO HANDLE A WEAPON.



"I KNOW COURTNEY KRIEGER USED TO BE A MODEL, BUT HOLY HELL IS SHE SO MUCH MORE THAN THAT.
"SHE BUILDS TANKS THAT CAN TAKE A BEATING. AND SHE AIN'T AFRAID TO TEST THEM HERSELF.

"LANCE STEINBERG IS THE BEST DRIVER I KNOW. IN THE STREETS OR IN THE FIELD. HE HAS HIS FLAWS, MAYBE A LITTLE OLD SCHOOL, I KNOW THAT.
"BUT IF I NEEDED A RIDE INTO BATTLE, HE'S MY FIRST PICK.



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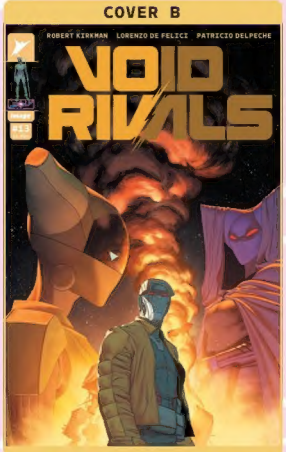

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